

## SPECIAL MEETING-MANSFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

APRIL 4, 2007

Mayor Elizabeth Paterson called the special meeting of the Mansfield Town Council to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Community Room of the Community Center.

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Blair, Clouette, Haddad, Hawkins, Koehn, Paterson, Paulhus, Schaefer

II. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE COUNCIL

No Comments

III. NEW BUSINESS

## 1. Mansfield Board of Education

Mayor Paterson welcomed the members of the Board of Education and staff. Present for the Board were Mary Feathers, Min Lin and Shamin Patwa. Staff present were Gordon Schimmel, the Superintendent of Schools and Fred Barruzzi, the Assistant Superintendent of Schools.

Mr. Schimmel described the Board's budget as relatively modest, covering basic needs and programs. Recently the Board has reviewed the proposed construction in town and its potential impact on enrollment. The Board has hired an architect to look not at just the physical needs of the technology used in the schools, but also the refurbishment of the buildings. They expect to present the improvements to the voters in 2008.

Mr. Hawkins asked about the trend in contract agreements. Mr. Schimmel stated that they look at settlements in the area and are usually in the top quarter or third of area towns. He described their approach as conservative yet competitive.

Mr. Schaefer asked if the non-certified staff, whose salary is proposed to increase by 6%, are catching up to area salaries. Mr. Schimmel answered in the affirmative noting, however, that their insurance policy is more costly to the employee than some of the other Town contracts.

Mr. Paulhus questioned the increase in item 52202, Travel and Conference Fees. In FY 2005/06 sixty dollars was spent and \$2700 is proposed for this year. Mr. Smith will check into the amounts.

In response to Council members questions regarding tuition and transportation cost for Special Education students, Mr. Schimmel noted that staff is constantly reevaluating their approach to the services offered, but must adjust to the students as they are presented.

In summary, Mr. Schimmel commented that in this budget they did not entertain dreams but included what was needed to maintain the buildings and programs.

In discussions following the presentation, the Council agreed to ask the Board to make cuts of \$180,000. This amount is roughly proportional to the amount of cuts that Region 19 has

offered. Ms. Koehn stated that if revenues estimates are low then any surplus should be shared among all three entities, the Board, the Town and Region 19. A decision regarding the Town budget will be made after the Town Council has reviewed the proposal.

## 2. Daycare

The Daycare Board sets the budget for the Center.

## 3. Public Information Sessions on Proposed Budget

Town Manager, Matt Hart, offered to conduct his power point presentation regarding the budget at the public hearing on April 9<sup>th</sup>. The Council agreed it would be a good way to present the information to the public. Mr. Hart also suggested that a couple of informational sessions be held, perhaps on a Tuesday night and on a Thursday night at the Library. These sessions would be advertised in a variety of ways and consist of the power point presentation followed by general question and answer sessions. The Council agreed that it would be the right thing to do. Mr. Haddad suggested that the sessions be broadcast on the cable access station and advertised on the sandwich boards.

## 4. House Bill 6927: An Act Concerning Volunteer Service By Paid Emergency Personnel or Paid Firefighters

Mr. Hawkins presented the draft of a letter that he has prepared for CCM regarding their opposition to House Bill 6927. This proposed bill removes limits on a person's ability to volunteer as emergency personnel or as a firefighter in their hometowns if they are employed as such in another town. He asked the Council if they would like to join him by endorsing the letter.

Mr. Hawkins stated that 8 towns have such language in their contracts and people have been forced to resign as volunteers in their hometowns. He outlined the 3-core reasons for his concern (letter attached) noting that we live in an area of the state that supports and uses volunteer efforts.

Mr. Haddad questioned the bill's effect on current union contracts and stated that he cannot support undoing currently negotiated contracts. The Town Manager reported that he and Chief Dagon are in support of the proposed legislation. Mr. Schaefer noted the conflicting interests, the practical value of having volunteers available versus interference with union negotiations. Mr. Clouette commented that while he is hesitant to interfere with the collective bargaining process, the way the letter is written emphasizes the compelling freedom of a person to decide how to spend their free time.

Mr. Hawkins moved and Mr. Paulhus seconded that the Town Council write a brief cover letter in support of the concept of the letter he circulated.

In Favor: Blair, Clouette, Hawkins, Paterson, Paulhus, Schaefer

Against: Haddad

Abstaining: Koehn

IV. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made at 8:50 p.m. by Mr. Paulhus, seconded by Ms. Blair and passed by all.

Elizabeth Paterson, Mayor

Mary Stanton, Town Clerk